

It is a very nostalgic occasion for me, as well as an honor, to be ~~able~~ addressing this particular audience, in this setting. It is an occasion for me to try to recall the ~~view~~<sup>way</sup> of the world and the future ~~that I held~~<sup>looked to me</sup> when I was sitting with my graduating class where you are sitting now. Much as the world and I have ~~has~~ changed since then, I ~~find myself with the same basic appreciation~~<sup>seem to see</sup> ~~of the looking out~~, now as then, upon a world of quandaries and dilemmas, of uncertainties and complexities, a world in which our national responsibilities ~~were~~<sup>are</sup> ill-defined but ~~clearly large~~ evidently large, challenged by change and by the designs of hostile powers. <sup>P</sup> Those of you who are graduating today--who are about to acquire your own experience and responsibilities in dealing with the world outside the university and outside this ~~country~~<sup>nation</sup>--look on the end of this school year, I am sure, with mixed feelings. It so happens that the end of this school year ~~is an event~~<sup>has</sup> special significance, and mixed emotions, for me as well, as an official of the government who is forced to spend a great part of his time worrying about the problems of South Vietnam; for Graduation Days this year mark the end of a season of "teach-ins" on our Vietnam policy. <sup>P</sup> I may be speaking prematurely; perhaps those of you who missed the National Teach-in in ~~Washington~~ in mid-May or the other all-night debates that preceded it are planning to fill the summer vacation with Marches on Washington. But I suspect not. At least, I have the impression that most of the tired debaters who closed up ~~Washington~~ the ~~National~~ Teach-in in the early morning hours this ~~May~~<sup>May</sup> had reached a private judgment that their own need to discuss this particular subject all night had been largely satisfied. <sup>P</sup> For my own part, I am one of the few officials concerned with

~~You may have heard the speech by a popular comedian of~~  
(~~that one of the world's~~  
~~such matters~~ who has not had ~~the~~ occasion ~~for~~ so far this spring to confront an academic audience on these issues. Like certain others, I was forced by a crisis in the Caribbean to be a drop-out from the teach-in in Washington. Since this



appears to be my last chance, with the term ending, I would like to comment today on two or three of the issues of our involvement in Vietnam that the earlier debates as I have followed them, have shown to be salient.

First, the phenomenon of the debates themselves deserves a ~~word~~ word in retrospect: if they are indeed over.

~~Many~~ Many of you may have heard the parody by a popular comedian of the valedictory address to his crew by the captain of a ~~submarine~~ <sup>nuclear</sup> submarine, <sup>near the end of</sup> ~~after~~ a six-months ~~cruise~~ <sup>cruise.</sup> At one point, after a long and rather sentimental

summary of ~~the events of~~ their six months under the water together, the captain pauses, takes a deep breath, and reflects: "Looking back on the mutiny...."

Well, looking back on the teach-ins...it seems clear that one of the feelings they reflected, aside from ~~simple~~ <sup>in some academic circles</sup> disagreements over policy, was a suspicion that

government officials were publicly and perhaps even privately over-simplifying issues, ignoring threats and risks and costs, wishing away difficulties and

unpromising prospects. This is not to say that the critics themselves were ~~always~~ <sup>always</sup> conscientious in <sup>framing</sup> ~~facing~~ realistic alternatives, in defining their goals, and <sup>notably</sup> ~~and~~

in facing the risks and the consequences of their proposals. But it is

understandable that to someone who thinks hard enough about the problems we face

in Southeast Asia to be perplexed by them, <sup>— and this is true of some though not all of the critics of our policies. —</sup> it does not ~~sim~~ inspire confidence

to hear public statements that <sup>may</sup> ~~seem~~ to express a simple view of the issues

and a rather simple optimism: <sup>all</sup> as public statements by ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> government have a natural tendency to do.

It may be that the government needs to find a way to communicate specifically with the academic community of scholars and serious students, a channel for dialog in which one can take the time ~~to~~ <sup>for</sup> detailed reasoning and examination of evidence and consideration of <sup>the</sup> many issues: something comparable to the budget hearings before Congress. Like the budget hearings, any such dialog must be extremely expensive in the time of high government officials; but there are occasions when it may be justified. It would be, I am afraid, flattering to the



to the motives and atmosphere of many of the earlier "teach-ins" to suggest that they were close to being such a channel for real communication and intellectual confrontation. But as ~~xx~~ government representatives came to have greater opportunity to present an opposing case--and in the atmosphere of many of these sessions, the spokesman for the government position was made acutely aware that he was in the role of a dissenter--the debates may have served something of this purpose.

What, in the end, was accomplished? Few listeners, no doubt, were converted from one set of firm views on policy to an equally strong belief ~~x~~ in the opposing views. But the reactions encountered by one of my colleagues, who participated in several sessions and found himself stimulated and encouraged by them, are revealing. He found ~~xxxxxx~~ cause for congratulating himself in the fact that a number of students ~~in from predominantly hostile~~ audiences that were, initially, almost uniformly hostile, came up to him after the long discussion to say: "Now, I'm confused." That, he thought, was almost sure to be a notable ~~xx~~ shift in the direction of wisdom. <sup>7</sup> The other reaction that was reported to him was that he had "reassured" many members of his audience about government policy-making--not by the substance of what he said, because many of them ended up disagreeing with that--but by the very ~~xxxxxxxx~~ demonstration that government officials were using reason on these problems, were doing their best to weigh a multitude of considerations including long-range consequences, and were listening to opposing views. It seems too bad that such an impression would strike an American audience as in any way surprising or revealing or "reassuring." But perhaps it is necessary from time to time to be franker than most public occasions, with their multiple audiences, ~~and~~ will allow about matters of doubt and controversy within the government; it is ~~always misleading~~ nearly always mistaken, and sometimes ~~dangerously~~ worryingly so, to imagine that the government is either monolithic or totally self-assured in matters of the highest ~~x~~ import.

(applies to)  
That certainly ~~includes~~ the subject of Vietnam, which has come to involve  
concern  
matters of the highest import. Scarcely a question, a doubt, a ~~consideration~~  
has been raised, I believe, by any critic of the Administration in recent months  
~~for discussion~~ ~~at some point~~  
that had not been ~~raised~~ by some participant in the policy-making process within  
endorsed or at least raised for discussion at some point  
the Administration. It so happens that the comments I shall be making on the  
particular questions I shall address are not, so far as I am aware, matters of  
controversy within government circles. *Without trying in any way to be comprehensive or to sum up the preceding*  
*months of discussion,* I ~~have~~ propose to discuss several  
questions ~~raised by the recent public discussions~~ which seem to divide,  
in a rough way, proponents of the government's policy from its critics.



The first question is: Why are we in South Vietnam? You have heard the President's answer to this on many occasions, including his address at Johns Hopkins on April 7 and ~~the statement~~ his message to Congress on May 4.